

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, FJ
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER TO VISIT SOUTH KOREA AND CHINA

REF: WELLINGTON 01029

1. GOF HAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER RATU SIR KAMISESE K. T. MARA WILL MAKE A FOUR DAY VISIT TO SOUTH KOREA BEGINNING 7 JUNE FOLLOWING WHICH HE WILL VISIT PRC 11-17 JUNE. THE VISITS ARE IN RESPONSE TO INVITATIONS FROM THE TWO HOST GOVERNMENTS.

2. ANNOUNCEMENT FOLLOWS OFFICIAL VISIT BY PRC AMBASSADOR MI TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY BASE THE ISLAND OF LAKEBA. AN INVITATION TO LAKEBA IS AN HONOR WHICH RATU MARU DISTRIBUTES VERY SPARINGLY. IT WILL BE RECALLED FROM WELLINGTON'S 1029 THAT AMBASSADOR SELDEN WAS THE ONLY FOREIGN DIPLOMATITTO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO LAKEBA RECENTLY.

3. IN RECENT CONVERSATION MALANDAIN, THE FRENCH CHARGE
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D'AFFAIRES, RELATED TO ME AN INCIDENT WHICH GIVES SOME INSIGHT INTO AMBASSADOR MI'S SUCCESS IN GETTING INTO RATU MARA'S GOOD GRACES. IT SEEMS THAT LAST JULY WHEN THE DOCK STRIKE HAD PUT GOF AND RATU MARA PERSONALLY IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF THE SOLIDARITY SUPPORT EXTENDED TO THE FIJI WORKERS BY THE NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONS AMBASSADOR MI CALLED ON RATU

MARA TO CONVEY HIS UNDERSTANDING OF GOF'S DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE OF ITS OVERDEPENDENCE ON NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN SUPPLIERS AND OFFERED PRC HELP IF NEEDED. IT SEEMS THAT RATU MARA HAD BEEN SO SHAKEN BY THE EFFECTIVENESS AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STRIKE AS TO BE TOUCHED BY MI'S GESTURE. MALANDAIN SURMISED AS MUCH FROM THE FACT THAT AT A RECEPTION SHORTLY AFTER MI'S CALL RATU MARA GATHERED AROUND HIM THE NEW ZEALAND, AUSTRALIAN AND UK HIGH COMMISSIONERS AND THE FRENCH CHARGE AND AGGRESSIVELY BERATED THEM FOR HAVING FAILED TO RESPOND TO FIJI'S IMMEDIATE NEEDS AT THE TIME OF THE STRIKE AND THAT THE PRC AMBASSADOR WAS THE ONLY ONE TO DO SO. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE MARA SPOKE GLOWINGLY ABOUT MI'S SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEMS OF FIJI.

4. COMMENT: THE FOREGOING IS ONE MORE EVIDENCE OF THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE CAUSED BY THE DOCK STRIKE WHICH IN RETROSPECT TAKE ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A MAJOR EVENT LIKELY TO INFLUENCE NOT ONLY INTERNAL POLICIES ON FOREIGN TRADE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS IN GENERAL. AT LEAST THE TIMING OF THE PM VISIT TO PRC MAY WELL HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY MI'S GESTURE LAST JULY.

5. RECENT SPEECHES BY THE PM (ONE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR FIJI AND THE OTHER ON THE EVOLUTION OF MULTI-RACIAL COUNTRIES) WERE REplete WITH STATEMENTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNDERSCORING THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL TRADITIONS AND CULTURE AS FOUNDATIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND PRIDE. WE BELIEVE THAT THESE STATEMENTS PROVIDE AT LEAST AN INTELLECTUAL EXPLANATION OF RATU MARA'S INTEREST IN A VISIT TO THE PRC WHERE REPORTEDLY THE SAME EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON NATIONAL TRADITIONS AND CULTURE AS DISTINCT FROM CERTAIN WESTERN VALUES.

6. ACCORDING TO MOST FOREIGN OBSERVERS ONE NEED NOT READ MUCH FROM AN IDEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW AND THE PM'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRC INVITATION. IT ACCORDS WITH FIJI'S AMBITIONS TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE AND THE AREA, FIJI'S HOPE TO DIVERSIFY ITS FOREIGN TRADE AND ABOVE ALL WITH RATU MARA'S INTENSE DISTRUST OF THE SOVIETS. FURTHERMORE RATU MARA'S IS A VERY CURIOUS MIND, KEENLY INTERESTED IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND EXPERIMENTATION THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. AMBASSADOR MI MUST HAVE HAD AN EASY TIME AROUSING RATU MARA'S CURIOSITY ABOUT THE PRC SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM AND HOW IT WORKS. WE KNOW FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM WEIGHS HEAVILY ON HIS MIND.

7. THE OBVIOUS EFFORT MADE BY THE PM TO BALANCE THE

PRC VISIT BY A VISIT TO ROK FIRST SHOWS THAT A SENSITIVITY
TO POSSIBLE MISINTERPRETATION OF HIS VISIT BY SOME OF
HIS NEIGHBORS (TONGA) BUT ALSO BY MORE DISTANT FRIENDS.
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